

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in complete condition for allowance.

Applicants' attorney wishes to thank Examiner Salvatore for the courtesies extended in the personal interview of October 20, 2005. As shown above, the claims have been amended as we discussed.

Currently, claims 1, 6-20, and 41-54 remain pending in the present application, including independent claims 1, 47, and 51. For example, claim 1 is directed to a coform nonwoven web having a substantially uniform structure. The nonwoven web comprises a plurality of substantially continuous multicomponent thermoplastic filaments and a second absorbent material. The absorbent material is selected from the group consisting of absorbent fibers, absorbent particles, and mixtures of absorbent fibers and absorbent particles. Absorbent second material is substantially uniformly dispersed within the multicomponent thermoplastic filaments in the z-direction of the coform nonwoven web. The multicomponent thermoplastic filaments comprise about 5 to about 30% by weight of the nonwoven web and the absorbent material comprise about 70 to about 95% by weight of the nonwoven web.

The presently claims are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable under either U.S. Patent No. 5,952,251 issued to Jackson, et al. or Publication No. WO 00/66824 of Neely, et al. in combination with U.S. Patent No. 6,437,214 issued to Everett, et al. The Office Action admits that neither of the primary references teach or suggest that a second absorbent material be substantially uniformly dispersed within the multicomponent thermoplastic filaments in the z-direction of a coform web. In order to overcome the deficiencies of the primary references, Everett, et al. was cited to provide

evidence that coform webs comprising a blend of fibers and or particulate can be homogeneously mixed.

However, Applicants respectfully disagree with this interpretation of Everett, et al. In the cited section of Everett, et al., it is disclosed that “superabsorbent particles may be substantially homogeneously mixed with the hydrophilic fibers, or may be nonuniformly mixed.” Col. 14, lines 35-37, emphasis added. However, Everett, et al. does not teach or suggest that superabsorbent particles may be substantially homogeneously mixed with thermoplastic filament. Everett, et al. merely discloses that the superabsorbent particles can be homogeneously mixed with hydrophilic fibers, which is prior to incorporation into a coform web.

Applicants submit that none of the cited references teach or suggest a coform web having an absorbent material substantially uniformly dispersed in the z-direction of a web of substantially continuous thermoplastic filaments. As the present application points out, in prior art coforming processes, the composition of the coformed material generally varies in the z-direction. Typically, at the top and bottom surfaces of the coform material, there is a higher concentration of the thermoplastic filaments and a lower concentration of the second material, as compared to the middle region of the product. Conversely, in the middle region of the coform material, there is typically a higher concentration of the second material and a lower concentration of the thermoplastic filaments, as compared to the top and bottom surfaces. Page 1, line 25 through Page 2, line 4.

In fact, Everett, et al. supports this assertion by disclosing that the concentrations of the superabsorbent particles may be arranged in a nonstepwise gradient through a substantial portion of the thickness (z-direction) of each layer of the absorbent structure, with the lower concentrations toward the body side of the absorbent composite and the

relatively higher concentrations toward the outer side of the absorbent structure. Col. 14, lines 38-55. This disclosure of Everett, et al., is exactly the problem addressed in the present application.

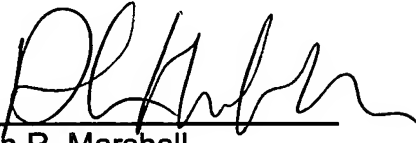
Applicants respectfully submit that no motivation or suggestion exists in the combined references to provide a coform web having an absorbent material substantially uniformly dispersed within the multicomponent thermoplastic filaments in the z-direction. As such, Applicants respectfully submit that the present Application is in complete condition for allowance.

Furthermore, none of the cited references teach the presently claimed ranges. For example, Jackson, et al., discloses that the primary polymer (meltspun continuous fibers) can be present in amount from about 30 to about 35%. Also, example 1 and example 2 disclose that the primary polymer is present in an amount of 50% and 40% respectively. Additionally, the absorbent material (pulp fibers and/or superabsorbent materials) can be present in amount from about 50 to about 55%. The absorbent materials were disclosed as being present in example 1 and example 2 in amounts of 40% and 45%, respectively. As such, Applicants respectfully submit that the presently claimed range is not disclosed or suggested in the cited references.

Applicants respectfully submit that the presently pending claims are patentable over the cited references for at least the reasons stated above. As such, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of the presently pending claims, including independent claims 1, 47, and 51. Should Examiner Salvatore have any further questions or concerns, she is invited and encouraged to contact the undersigned at her convenience.

Respectfully submitted,
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Date


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